

**Big Cypress National Preserve
ORV Advisory Committee Meeting
October 26, 2010
Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center
Ochopee, Florida
3:30 PM**

Minutes of the Meeting

(Unofficial until approved)

Committee members in attendance: Robin Barnes, Chuck Hampton, Marsha Connell, Brad Cornell, Wayne Jenkins, Manley K. Fuller, John Adornato, Jorge Gutierrez, David Denham, Laurie Macdonald, Karl Greer, Franklin Adams, Barbara Jean Powell. Absent: Curt Witthoff.

NPS staff in attendance: Pedro Ramos, Damon Doumlele, Bob DeGross, Susan Rossi, Dennis Bartalino, Leslie Wells, Kit Carrington, David Hamm, Steve Schulze, Delia Clark (contracted facilitator)

Members of the public: Approximately 15

Welcome: The meeting was opened with The Pledge of Allegiance led by Wayne Jenkins.

Superintendent Pedro Ramos thanked members of the public for attending and for investing their knowledge in the process. He acknowledged the incredible commitment of the Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Committee (ORVAC) members to getting a very difficult task done right.

Delia Clark expressed pleasure in the committee for being prepared to take myriad issues to the next step. As facilitator she reviewed the Agenda and anticipated committee tasks to be completed. She explained this is a public meeting of the committee, not a public hearing, and reviewed the process by which the public can offer input: oral comments, by letter, phone, online, or upon committee member request for information.

Approval of the Minutes: Due to the preparer having been ill, the minutes were not distributed in time for committee members to review. Committee members were told they would have the opportunity to request edits or approve the Minutes via email the following week.

Memos to the Superintendent: Ms Clark reminded committee members the subject matter memos they produce are recommendations only and upon approval by the committee they will be transmitted to the Superintendent who,

together with staff, will consider them in rendering their management decisions. She then led the committee in final discussion of the three memos they drafted at the August 2010 meeting:

Guest Access Memo: The committee approved as drafted.

Secondary Trails Memo: Ms. Clark reported she amended this draft memo based upon input submitted by Mr. Adams and Mr. Adornato, acknowledging the tension related to the understanding that destinations should be locations that have specific uses such as hunting, wildlife photography, bird watching, camping, and spiritual practice, and the fact that essentially the entire Preserve is appropriate for all of these identified uses and more.

Ms. Macdonald recommended amending the language and asked that in the future the process for designating secondary trails start by assuring natural, cultural and historical resources have been identified, as well as preferred destinations.

The committee approved the memo with the two amendments as noted.

Disbursed camping and Pull-offs Memo: Laurie Macdonald expressed concern that use of the word “corridors” in the memo erroneously conveys the impression that the committee is recommending an area 100 meters wide on each side of the trail through uplands in which multiple perpendicular travel trails would be permitted. She requested clarification of the committee’s intent to provide pull-offs via the shortest upland route into these areas. The committee affirmed this clarification, and after a discussion replaced the word “corridor” in the draft memo with the term “pull-offs”.

Mr. Adornato offered a suggestion that travel parallel to the designated trail be prohibited in the pull-off zones, and Ms. Powell responded that the nature of off-road travel requires one to drive around vegetation and other obstacles which may dictate brief parallel travel.

Ms. Clark remarked that the committee’s intent is clear and she will fine tune the draft and distribute it to committee members for approval.

Superintendent’s Report: Mr. Ramos acknowledged Mr. Chuck Collins, FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission South Region Director, who in cooperative partnership with the NPS will be monitoring ORVAC meetings. Mr. Ramos indicated the two agencies are close to signing a Cooperative Management Agreement. He introduced Preserve staff and praised the good work they are doing implementing the ORV plan and commended members of

the committee for their commitment to the process. Mr. Ramos updated the committee on its membership status. Ms. Robin Barnes has been reappointed and Ed Woods resigned in order to pursue a staff position with the National Geographic television program "Swamp Man".

Mr. Ramos acknowledged that a tremendous amount of work has been accomplished in implementing designated trails in the Turner River Unit. He clarified that the trail system in this unit will require fine tuning. He expressed enthusiasm for the Google Earth mapping technology staff is now employing which greatly improved the collection of good public input for trail identification for the Corn Dance Unit.

Mr. Ramos referenced the committee discussion of future agenda items that takes place at the conclusion of each ORVAC meeting. He expressed concern that in recent months the committee meetings have adjourned late due to the volume of agenda items, and feels the agenda must be better managed. He indicated that while he and staff appreciate and take very seriously all agenda recommendations, the extremely important issues such as the 60-day closure and access for the disabled must be deferred in order for the crucial primary task of implementing a good trail system to be addressed. He reminded the committee that NPS staff is in attendance not only to assist with the meeting, but to also listen to committee members' perspectives and to learn the issues. He urged committee members not to feel they must achieve perfection in wording the memos as he believes staff is leaving the meetings with a good impression of what the memos represent.

Scientific Research Needs: Mr. Ron Clark, Chief of Resource Management, presented an update on the scientific measures that have taken place or have been requested in the ORV Management Plan. He referred to the briefing the statements *ORV Research Needs Status* and *Prioritized List of ORV Research Needs* which can be found online at the Preserve's PEPC site. He said page 60 of the ORV Plan lists 31 baseline inventory requests and research needs related to ORV use in the Preserve. He advised that some items are genuinely needed, while other items may be considered less vital or even no longer relevant.

Mr. Clark explained the constraints BICY faces in obtaining funding for research projects listed in the ORV Plan. He clarified that the NPS is not a research organization. While there are opportunities for research to be conducted through NPS funding sources, Congress has not provided line item funds devoted specifically to BICY research. Instead, each fiscal year BICY must submit abstracts (ideas) in competition with 73 other park units in the Southeast Region seeking allocations from a limited system-wide pool of research funds appropriated by Congress in three categories of funding.

Ideas submitted by the park units are vetted by the SE Regional Office and those deemed most worthy are forwarded to the Washington office where another

panel reviews them and determines whether they will be funded, modified, rejected outright, or resubmitted for competition in the future. Due to the steep competition, park units typically only submit projects they feel offer the best chance of being funded.

Just \$960,000 is available for research in the Southeast Region, divided among the three categories of research. Every park unit typically submits a few project requests for each category, but ultimately only two or three projects from the collective region-wide submissions for each category are actually funded.

In spite of these constraints, Mr. Clark said approximately one-third of the inventory and research projects identified in the 2000 ORV Plan have been completed to date.

BICY is seeking assistance from ORVAC evaluating the remaining projects listed to offer recommendations on which are of the highest priority, which are still relevant, and possibly offering suggestions on new research needs.

Mr. Clark indicated one of the highest research priorities pertains to the status of endangered species, primarily Florida panthers, with respect to ORV use. He referenced panther/ORV research conducted by the University of Tennessee in the mid to late 1990s that suggested certain panther behavior occurred as a result of ORV use. But, he said, the document was very careful to raise the possibility that the observed panther behavior was not necessarily directly related to ORV use and that other influences could be at play. Mr. Clark said this research raised more questions than it answered, which inspired BICY to engage in a project with the University of Florida, with Professor Rob Fletcher as principle investigator, the objective being to develop baseline information for a more comprehensive examination of ORV use and its impacts on panthers and/or other resources, if they exist. This will involve characterizing 25 years of data related to ORV use, hunter registration data, and hunter success rates, and panther movement, primarily in the Bear Island Unit.

Mr. Clark solicited questions from the committee.

Mr. Fuller inquired if Dr. Fletcher is associated with the Fish and Wildlife Co-op Unit of the University, which is funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Mr. Clark responded that BICY is partnering with USFWS in this project and received assistance from that agency in developing the grant request.

Mr. Adams referenced Item #17 on the list which relates to recreational use interactions and the effects they have on visitor experiences. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the experiences of all visitors and determine any use incompatibilities between different user groups. Mr. Adams expressed the opinion the research concept was appropriate, but cited bias in the way it had

been conducted. He said it was begun on the last day of hunting season during the height of tourist season, excluding the hunting/ORV segment of the recreational community who had already left the woods. He questioned the research conclusions which referenced user conflicts he had never known to exist in all his years in the Cypress. He said, to the contrary, the traditional recreational community has always enjoyed good interactions with tourists, often allowing their vehicles to be photographed and answering tourists' questions about the Preserve. Mr. Clark responded there may have been some research opportunities that existed early in the planning stage that evaporated once the folks who were driving those initiatives were no longer on the scene.

Mr. Adams referenced Item #24, which proposed conducting a baseline biological inventory of reptiles and amphibian populations. He said this is extremely important information to gather as snakes are an indicator species whose populations have declined dramatically in the Preserve, particularly aquatic species. Mr. Clark responded that Item #24, which is an inventory only, has already been completed, but it doesn't answer the questions Mr. Adam is asking. He said an expansion of this effort may be appropriate new project to recommend, especially now that exotic snake species occur in the Preserve.

Ms Powell suggested forming an ORVAC subcommittee to review the research project list and draft recommendations for the full committee to consider. She also questioned the relevance of some baseline inventories to ORV management. Mr. Adornato agreed with the subcommittee suggestion.

Mr. Clark responded that he inadvertently forgot to acknowledge earlier in his report that, in conjunction with the development of the ORV Plan, an important funding category was created within the Southeast Region subsequent to the development of this project list. He said a new division conducts inventory and monitoring at the request of the park units and at no cost to the individual units. Therefore any baseline inventories done in the Preserve whether they are on the list or not and will not be done in competition with other projects on the list, nor will they divert funds from projects which have more relevance to ORV management.

Ms. Powell acknowledged instances of perceived bias in research against traditional uses in the Preserve. Some biases, she said, have been subtle and implies predetermined outcomes, such as reference to evaluating "impacts" rather than "effects" of ORV use. She requested all future research be proposed and conducted without bias and include consideration of beneficial effects of ORV access and use as well as the negative effects. She cited examples of possible unrecognized benefits to the resource that might have become negatives after historical ORV uses were prohibited: The Cape Sable seaside sparrow population reportedly declined after the ORV Plan banned airboats in the Sparrow Zone of Zone 4 of the Stairsteps Unit, and the deer population in Zone 4 collapsed in the decade following the Plan's Record of Decision.

Ms. Powell expressed the opinion that unbiased research can shed light on a possible connection.

Mr. Clark responded that in competing for funding sometimes “attention getters” and action words can pique interest and draw the attention of funding decision-makers to research needs.

Ms. Powell questioned whether Item #5 (Determine the effects of ORV use on cultural resources) relates to ancient cultures or living cultures such as the Gladesman culture which has been negatively affected by lack of historical access and stressed the need to study these impacts.

Mr. Adornato requested that staff add the status of research projects to the list in matrix format, and requested that the committee be provided copies of the completed reports. He stressed the usefulness of this information for stakeholders who constantly appeal to Congress for more funding for research. Mr. Clark responded that staff will provide the committee a link to the reports.

Mr. Adornato asked Mr. Clark for clarification of the Preserve’s specific needs from the committee. Mr. Clark responded that staff’s greatest need is advice as to what is relevant that wasn’t contemplated in 2000, as well as ideas on how to achieve it given existing funding constraints.

Public input related to research needs:

Mr. Lyle McCandless, speaking on behalf of himself and Big Cypress Sportsman’s Alliance, expressed disappointment that the agenda item related to research needs does not appear to pertain to his request in August 2010 for scientific justification of the rejection of trails the public recommended for the Turner River Unit, as he had hoped. He observed the need to remember Big Cypress is a national preserve, not a national park.

Dr. Christian Mogalvang stated that as a young man he conducted research at the lab in which Deet was discovered and he conducted scrub habitat research all through college before attending medical school. He said there is a tendency for people who want to preserve access to think they can appeal to people who have a natural sympathy for wildlife and the preservation of wildlife, but cautioned this sympathy can cause researchers to lose their scientific approach. He feels we are just now becoming aware of negative aspects of inhibiting the use of vehicles in the Preserve and he perceives a flash of hope that access may not be the problem it was once perceived to be. He believes traditional “random access” might even benefit the natural function of Big Cypress.

Matthew Schwartz, speaking as a frequent visitor of the Preserve and also representing South Florida Wildlands Association, expressed regret for arriving late and missing the presentation on scientific research. He asserted that research is an integral part of the ORV Management Plan, yet he perceived from reviewing the read-ahead documents that the Preserve feels the needed information has already been obtained. Mr. Swartz expressed the opinion that the law mandates protection of the resource takes precedence over recreational access and it is the obligation of the NPS to enforce those protections. He observed that many in attendance appeared to be focused on access issues while his primary concern is protection of the resource. He stressed the need to research issues such as the role ORVs play in the spread of invasive species and the effect hunting will have on prey availability in the Addition. Mr. Schwartz expressed concern over the cause of two reported instances of intraspecific aggression in the Addition and stressed the need to determine the cause. He encouraged the Preserve to expedite all the needed research projects.

Mr. Joel Marco, Airboat Association of Florida, expressed the opinion that attendees may appear to be focusing on access issues because this is a meeting specifically for the purpose of discussing ORV issues. He said his greatest concern is that in 2000, when the ORV Plan was developed, the Gladesman culture had not yet been officially recognized. He observed that provisions in the ORV Plan have devastated the Gladesman culture by severing airboat access, imposing hours of operation that prevent traditional frogging activities and other activities integral to the culture. He urged committee members to make preservation of the Gladesman culture and its traditional activities the highest priority in their deliberations.

Albert Bryant said he started coming to the Big Cypress with his father in the 1960s and is disappointed in the management changes. He and his children have a true appreciation for the resource and his profession is providing logistical support for Everglades research for myriad scientific research projects. He stressed that getting the language right is vital to preventing problems in the future. He recommended establishing a trail system in the Turner River Unit fashioned in a grid with trails no more than one mile apart, and observed that wildlife benefit from ORV trails. He expressed concern that cultural genocide is being waged against Gladesmen and expressed disappointment in the committee for not being assertive enough in protecting traditional uses.

Meeting governance: Ms. Clark observed that the meeting was beginning to fall behind schedule and asked the committee's preference whether public comments should be limited to two minutes rather than three minutes, or to allow the meeting to go overtime. Committee members concurred that members of the public traveled long distances to attend and participate and expressed a preference for extending the meeting to 9 PM rather than denying the public their allotted comment time. However, the public was reminded to stay on topic for the comment period subject matter.

Turner River trail network implementation: Bob DeGross, who is responsible for coordinating the ORV Management Plan and implementing it on the ground, advised the committee that staff has added conveniences to the Preserve's website to assist the public in following the committee work, and also for easier participation in the designated trail implementation process. These conveniences include a form for the public to submit recommendations, as well as "quick links" on the web site home page, features of which Mr. DeGross demonstrated for the committee. He said options for mapping technology include Google Earth, Garmin Map Source, and GPS Bable. The web site includes a notation that travel is permitted along marked trails only. He advised the committee that although trails are identified on the maps they are not open for public use until signage specific to a trail is in place in the field, and he offered assurances that the Preserve's maintenance department is expediting placement of the signage to the best of their ability. As of October 13, the website depicts 129 miles of primary trails and 68 miles of secondary trails within the Turner River Unit (TRU)

Mr. DeGross displayed a trail map depicting committee-recommended trails for the TRU based upon input provided by the public, and he explained the color coding reflecting various stages of trail assessment and designation. Every secondary trail implemented will be assigned an intersection number rather than a name. He offered his assurances that maintenance crews are hard at work documenting trail stabilization needs.

Mr. DeGross reported that the NPS is maintaining a log of all trails recommended by the committee. The agency expects to have a 300 page report available within the next month justifying why each recommended trail was either selected or rejected. He cited an example of a trail that was rejected because it was drawn out of scale and could not be found where depicted in the requestor's recommendation. The rejected trail was shaped similar to a much smaller scale trail in the general vicinity that was approved under the assumption that it was the intended trail. Mr. DeGross said this would account for a perception of reduced mileage.

Superintendent Ramos acknowledged that a lot of work remains to be done, and he asked the committee to assume responsibility for reviewing and providing feedback via a subcommittee. He left it to the committee to determine whether to task one subcommittee with the responsibility of reviewing both the TRU and the Corn Dance Unit (CDU), or establishing two subcommittees. He said the subcommittees may include non-committee members from the general public.

Karl Greer cited major concerns with markers along the Buckskin Trail that are ambiguous, confusing or misplaced. Some of the signs are placed 25-feet wide out in the open in an area that is impossible for ORVs to travel, which Mr. Greer fears will set the trail system up for failure. He cited other examples of confusing

signage. Mr. Adams summarized Mr. Greer's remark by stating that trails around Little Deer are mislabeled and incorrectly marked, conveying the impression a single trail is transitioning from primary to secondary and back to primary the length of the trail.

Mr. DeGross urged the public to get GPS waypoints of problem areas and report them to him and assured the committee staff is committed to correcting problems associated with signage.

Ms. Macdonald reminded the committee that the TRU primary trail system was unanimously approved by ORVAC and she inquired if all the recommended primary trails had been included. Mr. DeGross replied that no, the trail north of Windmill Prairie was deemed not sustainable, and a spur trail was rejected because the connecting route between each end could not be identified. Ms. Macdonald said there is a need for clarification of which trails were rejected and which have not yet been evaluated. Mr. DeGross indicated this information will be included in the forthcoming report.

Mr. Jenkins referred to a comment the committee received regarding signage on Trail #54. He asked why the trail did not continue as far as proposed. Mr. DeGross responded staff implemented the trail exactly as it is on the ground, but as long it does not cross private land there is a possibility for it to be extended further. Mr. DeGross will look into the matter.

Ms. Powell sought clarification if only the trails initially recommended by the committee were being documented in the approval/rejection report, or if subsequent trail recommendations submitted by the public would be included as well. Mr. DeGross responded that he is only documenting staff decisions for trails vetted by the committee, although in some instances subsequent recommendations from the public follow the same tracks. When they do, Mr. DeGross is documenting it. The committee will have an opportunity to review the newer submissions from the public, and committee recommendations coming from those reviews will be documented in staff's approval/rejection log.

Mr. Adams referred to earlier remarks by committee members asserting the need to further expand the secondary trail system. He said Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance submitted a map of recommendations to correct the deficiency which he urged the committee to endorse subject to groundtruthing by staff.

Public comment related to Turner River trail network implementation: Ms. Clark reminded members of the public of the need to stay on topic and to confine their remarks to the allotted time limit in order to keep the agenda on schedule.

Lyle McCandless, speaking personally and on behalf of Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance, referred to the map his organization officially submitted one day prior which depicts the group's suggestions for additional secondary

trails for the TRU. He indicated these recommendations are sustainable, appropriate, and fair. Mr. McCandless asserted the map has been endorsed by So FL sportsman's groups and elected officials. He expressed concern over the amount of trails that have been rejected by the NPS, reducing primary trails below the mileage allowed by the ORV Plan. He asked for the ratio of recommended primary and secondary trails currently being discussed to be viewed in the perspective of the 1,200 miles of trails a prior Preserve superintendent reportedly led many to believe would be approved. He expressed the opinion that 400-mile limit on primary trails is the origin of most of the problems associated with the Plan.

Mr. Dennis Wilson said he had good news to report related to the manner in which the Preserve is addressing shortcomings in the trail signage when they are discovered. In August, while traveling on his ORV in the northern Turner River Unit, Mr. Wilson observed numerous serious problems with signage. He subsequently met with Mr. Ramos, Mr. Lee, and Mr. DeGross to discuss the errors and praised the superintendent and staff for acting decisively to resolve the issues. They even arranged for him to accompany the maintenance crew into the field so that he could share with them his extensive knowledge of the problem area. He urged the staff to continue to invite knowledgeable locals to assist with field work this way in order to assure the best possible trail system.

Mr. Frank Denninger, Jetport Conservation and Recreation Club, relayed his organization's full support for the aforementioned map submitted by Mr. McCandless, which Mr. Denninger said he assisted in developing. He observed that while the trails depicted may initially appear numerous, they must be viewed in the perspective of the 20,000 miles of trails the agency said preceded the ORV plan. He asserted that a benefit of an extensive secondary trail system will be a reduction of maintenance costs due to better distribution of travel. Ms. Powell thanked Mr. Denninger for recommending the use of the Google Earth mapping technology which has so greatly improved the trail marking efforts.

Mrs. Patricia Bryant spoke of the terrifying plight families now face with their children being exposed to the dangers and temptations of drugs and violence in modern society. She expressed concern that lack of access due to over-regulation of public lands denies parents wholesome alternatives. Mrs. Bryant stressed the need for youth mentors to be able to introduce children to the spiritual and emotional benefits of outdoor recreation that her own children and grandchildren reaped from a lifetime in the Everglades. She observed that the world has major problems and pleaded for access to stop being denied.

Mr. Ralph Bellman said he lives in Big Cypress and has been here all his life. He acknowledged the map of additional trails that Mr. McCandless recommended appears excessive at first, but the on-the-ground reality is that the trails are considerably distant from one another and don't make a dent in the amount needed. Mr. Bellman indicated he is licensed to conduct wildlife research

and requested an appointment to the TRU subcommittee so that he can offer assurances that wildlife will not be negatively affected by the trail system. He asserted that to the contrary, backcountry trails actually provide benefits to wildlife by providing new plant growth. He observed that a photo of a panther that was displayed earlier was taken on a backcountry trail. Mr. Bellman cited an example of how panther road kill on Hwy. 29 was reduced by curtailing road shoulder mowing in order to eliminate new growth that was attracting panthers to the hazards of adjacent highway traffic.

Ms. Clark responded to Mr. Bellman's request for a position on the TRU subcommittee by explaining the subcommittee itself will determine who from the public they will invite to serve.

Matthew Schwartz, South Florida Wildlands and a recreational user of the Preserve, referred to 2006 research by Jeff Waddell and supervised by Frank Mozzotti that focused on the effect of fragmentation of habitat on wildlife. Of the four species of amphibians, Mr. Schwartz said only the large southern toad preferred ORV trails, and the other three species view the trails as "the end of the world." He referred to a stipulation in the ORV Plan that the basis of secondary trails is destinations. He reported that he asked for the destinations for the trails being laid out, but has not received the requested information, only assurances that the secondary trails are on uplands which are not sensitive resources. Mr. Schwartz asserted that the purpose of the plan is to reduce the spatial extent of ORVs in the Preserve. He expressed the opinion that the ORV Plan restricts secondary trails to accessing camp sites and private inholdings only and is not intended to be used to get people where they want to go. He said using the secondary trails in an attempt to regain the 1,200 miles to designated trails Mr. McCandless referred to earlier would be a direct violation of the Plan.

Mr. Joel Marco, Airboat Association of Florida (AAoF), acknowledged that placing signage is difficult, but cautioned that placement must follow existing state law for signage. He said AAoF supports adding the trails reflected in Mr. McCandless' map. He indicated that in his profession he is tasked with laying trails and roads through swamplands, and he asserted the science of trails is elementary: trails benefit some species and don't benefit other species. Despite the difficulty of identifying and laying out the trails, Mr. Marco does not feel the process is moving fast enough.

Ms. Clark remarked for the benefit of new meeting attendees who may wish to offer public comments that it is the committee's goal to keep the meeting civil. It is appropriate to question points other speakers may make in their presentations, but it is not appropriate to allow opinions about those points to become personal.

Mr. Eric Kimmel thanked committee members for their efforts. He expressed disappointment that no record was kept for trails that were originally recommended by the public and were not moved forward by the committee's

vetting process. He asserted that the public made good faith efforts, and now their time and effort was wasted when their input was not recognized. He cited Mr. Jimmy Galvin as an example of someone whose input has been disregarded. Mr. Kimmel asked for record of all public input and justification for rejection to be included in staff's report. He said he cannot support the agency proposed trails as currently depicted, however he does support the addition of trails recommended by Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance. Mr. Kimmel expressed concern that the work in progress does not depict any primary trails interconnecting trails between the Turner River Unit and the Corn Dance Unit, as well as the Addition. He asserted this is the time to provide those interconnections. He opposes trails depicted that dead end within a few hundred yards of other trails as he feels common sense dictates they connect in order to avoid unnecessary impacts of vehicles having to turn around and backtrack. He said he feels more trails are needed overall.

Mr. Bill Clark, Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance, expressed concern that one does not see children much in the Preserve anymore, and he agreed with Mrs. Bryant's assertion that young people are losing out due to management actions that discourage family participation. He cited a provision that young people cannot drive ORVs until they are licensed drivers, yet they are prohibited from riding double on ATVs with family members who are licensed. He said the map submitted by the Alliance is very conservative and at least half of the recommendations have been documented by GPS. Mr. Clark urged ORVAC endorsement of the Alliance map and offered to volunteer his time assisting with field work. He referenced specific trails that need tweaking, however his allotted speaking time did not provide time to discuss in depth.

Ms Sharon Moya requested that more landmark names (The Cowpens, Austin's Pasture) be placed on the maps to provide reference points. She reported that the access kiosks do not currently provide maps for the visiting public. She expressed concern that a lot of the secondary trails lead to private property and stop. She acknowledged it is public land, but feels it is unfair to the landowner and to the public to limit Preserve visitors to roads that lead to someone's house. She asserted there are miles and miles of existing sustainable trails which will provide a wonderful trail system if the NPS will only allow them.

Mr. Tom Shirley explained his long history in the Everglades and Big Cypress starting back in the early 1950s when wildlife was abundant. He cited myriad species ranging from snakes, raccoons and opossums that have virtually disappeared through the years from what he feels is the killing power of pollutants in the water. In the olden days a light shining in the Everglades night would attract insects in such vast amounts they would have to be swept up the next day and could fill a wash tub, yet on a recent night he did not see a single moth that was attracted to a similar light shining in the Everglades. Mr. Shirley expressed concern that the NPS is picking on the people, but this isn't the

problem. He said the killing power of the water is the problem and it is not being addressed.

Mr. Albert Bryant expressed his disappointment in the scant trails offered by the ORVAC. He questioned whether it was the result of ignorance or complacency. He asserted that the limited trail system is not consistent with the intent of the Preserve enabling legislation. He questioned what happened to the trail recommendations originally submitted by the ORV community in the late 1990s and asserted that people are being burned out by being asked to repeatedly submit and resubmit input. He expressed concern over tons of fill the NPS placed on primary trails that turned a five hour trip into short, easy rides deep into the backcountry. He urged the committee not to be intimidated by threats of litigation as rolling over will let the public down.

Break: Ms. Clark announced a brief break for refreshments while the agenda development subcommittee convenes for a short discussion on how best to adjust the evening's agenda in order to adjourn on time at 8 PM.

Meeting reconvened: Ms. Clark reconvened the meeting and announced that the agenda development subcommittee recommended deferring discussion on trail terminuses until another meeting and moving forward with status reports only on Corn Dance Unit and Stairsteps Units 2 and 3 with no question and answer period for the committee and no public input period specific to this subject matter. The subcommittee recommended that time saved be devoted instead to the formation of a subcommittee[s] for these units. She reminded the public they will have the opportunity to submit comments during the general comment period. Ms. Powell recognized Ms. Moye and thanked her for bringing a delicious dessert that meeting attendees enjoyed during break.

Update on the Corn Dance Unit and Stairsteps Unit Zones 2 & 3: Mr. DeGross reported that BICY held a productive public meeting on September 15, 2010, to solicit input for trails in the Corn Dance Unit and Stairsteps Unit Zones 2 and 3. He indicated that the NPS had set no parameters on the suggestions and that a lot of good ideas were received. He expressed the opinion that the agency's method of gathering useful information has vastly improved because participants learned as they went along.

Mr. DeGross displayed a map color coded to depict the conceptual primary trails (which are already marked in the field) as well as the recommended trail additions from the September 15 meeting. Although some people offered suggestions for designating primary and secondary trails, Mr. DeGross clarified that the public was not specifically asked to classify their recommendations as one or the other. Although the names of the people who submitted ideas were documented, their identities were not included in this update.

Mr. DeGross said suggestions were also received for how to address issues related to the Florida Hiking Trail and the Eleven Mile Road, both of which prohibit ORV use except at designated crossings. He indicated that the Jetport is private property, so trail suggestions for this area are not applicable unless they pertain to the only access point allowable under the ORV Plan, which is located at the north end of the Jetport property. Mr. Denham expressed the opinion that special consideration must be given to improving historical access east from Oasis to the west end of the Jetport landing strip.

Mr. DeGross reminded the committee the ORV Plan allows for approximately 60-miles of primary trails in the Corn Dance Unit, and he believes the conceptual primary trails system has reached that mileage already. Staff has not yet groundtruthed the new recommendations. Mr. DeGross observed that the lay of the land in the Corn Dance is different than the Turner River Unit.

Mr. DeGross asked for feedback from the committee on how to proceed and suggested the committee may want to form a subcommittee to review and make recommendations for the Corn Dance Unit based upon input from the public.

Mr. Gutierrez suggested the NPS partner with the FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission during this effort because the state agency has an excellent process for expediting planning, and also for bringing in members of the general public with special knowledge the target areas. Mr. DeGross responded that the Google Earth mapping technology has proved to be a useful tool in expediting the process and offered a reminder that the subcommittee will be authorized to bring in non-committee members to assist. He observed that while a lot of excellent suggestions were made, they were made by a small group of people. These individuals can be invited into the process at the subcommittee's pleasure.

Mr. Gutierrez expressed the opinion that it is important to keep the public informed as much as possible throughout the planning process. Toward this end, he suggested that staff post the mapping products in various stages of development so the public can follow what's going on and offer input in a timely manner, which will help keep the process moving. Mr. Ramos responded that the suggestion is a level of detail that can be discussed on a subcommittee level while addressing how best to proceed

Subcommittee formation: Ms. Clark guided the committee into a discussion about subcommittee formation. She questioned if it would be best use of time to roll all the work into one subcommittee, or to form separate subcommittees for each subject matter. Some committee members expressed interest in serving on a committee, but said that due to limits on discretionary time or lack of knowledge of specific units they were unable to participate in all of the proceedings.

Ms. Powell suggested having two subcommittees (Turner River and Corn Dance/Stairsteps), and expressed hope that for continuity at least some members of the original Turner River subcommittee could serve on both subcommittees. Knowledgeable members of the public could be invited to participate in workshops devoted to their unit[s] of interest, but would not necessarily be required to attend meetings that focus on units they have no interest in.

Ms. Clark suggested dissolving the original Turner River subcommittee and urged the former members to volunteer for the new subcommittees. She polled committee members on which, if any, committee they would be able to serve. Mr. Ramos appointed Wayne Jenkins to the role of liaison for both subcommittees with responsibilities for tapping knowledgeable members of the public for both subcommittees and for coordinating the subcommittee meetings. Mr. Ramos then assigned the subcommittees their charge. Results of the discussion are as follows:

Turner River Unit New Subcommittee

Charge:

- Evaluate the trail network that has already been implemented in the Turner River Unit and subsequently improved as represented earlier in this meeting
- Consider material recently collected, and provide feedback to the ORVAC so that the committee can thoroughly discuss the feedback and develop recommendations to the NPS for making improvements to what has been collected already

ORVAC members serving on the Turner River Unit Subcommittee:

- Wayne Jenkins, Subcommittee Liaison
- Chuck Hampton
- Barbara Jean Powell
- Laurie Macdonald
- Karl Greer
- Franklin Adams

Corn Dance/Stairsteps Zone 2 and 3 Subcommittee:

Charge:

- Consider public comments received at the August 2010 meeting
- Provide feedback to the ORVAC with respect to public input so the committee can develop recommendations to the NPS as to what to implement

ORVAC members serving on the Corn Dance/Stairsteps Zones 2 and 3 Subcommittee:

- Wayne Jenkins, Subcommittee Liaison
- David Denham
- Wayne Jenkins
- Brad Cornell
- John Adornato
- Robin Barnes
- Barbara Jean Powell

Mr. Ramos clarified these charges direct the committee and subcommittees to look at everything that the NPS has implemented, including the secondary trail systems in place and new information the NPS has received, and to provide feedback on *anything* related to the trail system, things that are working, things the subcommittee is displeased with or concerned about, whether it is to add or remove a secondary trail, whatever the case might be, in order to provide feedback to the ORVAC who will offer recommendations to the NPS.

In response to an inquiry about the estimated time frame for subcommittee deliverables, Mr. Ramos said he urges the Corn Dance subcommittee to get as much work done as possible before the December 7, 2010 meeting as the Preserve would like to have the Corn Dance trail system implemented by spring or summer 2011. He said time is of the essence in the Turner River Unit, as well, because many preserve users are anxious to see opportunities that are currently not available.

Ms. Clark suggested the committee leave it up to the subcommittee to determine the point at which to invite non-committee members of the subcommittees to participate, and whether to meet in person or via phone conference. She indicated a spot will be provided on the December 7, 2010 ORVAC agenda for status reports by the subcommittees.

General public comment:

Mrs. Patricia Bryant asserted that the children of today will be the leaders of tomorrow, and she urged the committee to preserve their right to enjoy the wonderful things that nature provides from being taken away. She worries that at the rate access is being denied her great-grandchildren will have nothing left. She urged the committee to give back rather than take away uses.

Mr. Albert Bryant advised that federal law dictates that when less than three percent of an area is affected it is not considered an impact. He asked for a map to be produced depicting existing trails, and for the committee to remove the trails that are unnecessary instead of going about it in reverse as it is currently done. He urged decision-makers to experience the woods first-hand in winter and in summer so that they can have a good grasp of on the ground realities before making “air conditioned decisions”. He said the maps do not put the trail system in perspective and he listed some of the traditional access that is now denied, including reducing access sites, concentrating people into pockets of use, eliminating a class of vehicle using incomplete science. He said Loop Road used to be lined with pickup trucks and trailers belonging to people enjoying the Preserve, and now the same area is closed due to the decline in wildlife. Mr. Bryant expressed a need to hold ORVAC meetings at a time and location convenient to east coast residents.

Mr. Tom Shirley said he lays awake at night worrying about how the government and its agencies throughout the United States are taking away citizens rights. He cited an example that affects him personally: His children and grandchildren can't come out to his private property within the preserve without asking the Park Service's permission. Mr. Shirley reflected upon the thousands of American soldiers who have died for these freedoms that have been taken away. He spoke of his personal involvement in the creation of Big Cypress National Preserve while he was a game warden who patrolled the Everglades, Big Cypress and the Ten Thousand Islands. He said he assisted only after receiving assurances the Cypress would be managed as a state wildlife management area. In listening to committee deliberations, he said, it sounds as if people will have to bring a yardstick to the Preserve in order to recreate. He asserted that what has happened since the creation of the Preserve is wrong and appealed for a return to traditional uses.

Mr. Bill Clark, Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance, responded to the remarks of a previous speaker regarding alleged adverse impacts of backcountry trails on wildlife. He reflected upon prior closures in Fakahatchee Strand that were similar to those being implemented in Big Cypress. At the time there were tram roads throughout Fakahatchee Strand that hunters' vehicles helped to keep open, and wildlife benefitted from the open areas. At that time it was not unusual for 100 deer to be harvested from the area on opening day. After the area was closed to

vehicles and hunting, the open areas grew over so that one could no longer walk upright through much of Fakahatchee Strand, and the deer herd dwindled to a fraction of the area's historical population. Mr. Clark spoke of BICY ORV permits, asserting that even with the full 2000 permits issued there are rarely more than two hundred vehicles in the Preserve at one time. He urged the committee to either recommend increasing the ORV permits, or to reassess the classes of vehicles allowed with the intent of returning to traditional vehicles only.

Mr. Joel Marco, Airboat Association of Florida, acknowledged the superintendent has a tough task. He indicated one of the biggest killers of the Gladesman culture is the inability of youth to participate in traditional activities due to the federally imposed prohibition of individuals under 16 to operate ORVs, which is inconsistent with state law. He referred to the collapse of the deer herd now that severe restrictions to access have been imposed. He asserted that back in the days when hordes of hunters would descend upon the Preserve during hunting season, and high deer harvests were the norm, the deer herd was robust. He observed that the herd in portions of the Preserve is gone now that hunters and their ORVs have been removed from the resource, and he asked for scientific research to establish what happened to the resource after the hunters were removed. He repeated his assertion that, collectively, the excessive regulations are making it impossible for Gladesman youth to accompany their parents, uncles and aunts, or grandparents to engage in traditional cultural pursuits and this is killing the Gladesman culture to the detriment of wildlife populations.

Mr. Matthew Schwartz, South Florida Wildlands and a recreational user of the Preserve, urged meeting attendees not to claim that there is a lack of access to the Preserve because access is permitted in 100% of the Preserve. It is just motorized access that is not permitted everywhere in the Preserve, he said. He referred to a 15 year old youth who joined him on a hike into the Addition recently who had a wonderful time. He read from enabling legislation and congressional reports that said dictates that ORV use is permitted, but must be compatible with protection and other uses of the Preserve. Mr. Schwartz expressed concern that the Addition GMP, soon to be released, will severely impact 300-million non-motorized users of the Preserve. He observed that the Addition GMP is expected to provide for 700 ORV permits to be issues, which he indicated represents only one-percent of South Florida ORVs, the rest of which will be locked out of the Addition. But, he said, all the ORV owners will continue to be allowed access, however, without their vehicles.

Dr. Christian Mogalvang expressed the opinion that the prior speaker missed the point, which is for many so-called conservationists to trying to conserve all the water for the large developments and excessive use of water resources by urban areas. Dr. Mogalvang expressed the opinion that damage to the culture of the country far outweighs other issues and no harm was done by traditional uses.

Mr. Frank Denninger, Jetport Conservation and Recreation Club, said his club members are primarily focused on the Jetport area, but they are quite knowledgeable about Corn Dance Unit because they use both areas. He warned that it is a big mistake to try to run the three subcommittee tasks simultaneously. He feels the committee action should be staggered to allow more people to participate in the process. He recommended moving forward first with the Turner River Unit, incorporating new input offered by the public and Big Cypress Sportsman's Alliance. Then move on to Corn Dance, and finally to the Stairsteps Unit.

Mr. Denninger said he agreed with Mr. Greer's earlier statement that hunting season, a time of great importance to hunters, is an inopportune time to expect participants to be able to devote their full attention to the planning process. He asserted that no meeting should be held to knock out as much as one trail (much less two-thirds of the trails as was done by the original Turner River Subcommittee) until the end of hunting season because the ORV community would risk being hamstrung by no disbursed use the moment designated trails are implemented. He expressed the opinion that it was a travesty for sportsman to have to ground truth trails themselves this year, on foot in the heat of summer, in order to participate in the trail identification process within the confines of the rules.

Mr. Denninger observed that the Corn Dance Unit is comprised of 100,000 acres of land area, and has been allocated only 60 miles of primary trails. The Turner River Unit is comprised of a greater land mass, but when the acreage representing the sensitive areas closed entirely to vehicles is subtracted, the remaining acreage amounts to 100,000 acres, the same as Corn Dance. Yet 139 miles of primary trails have been allocated for Turner River. Mr. Denninger expressed the opinion that primary trail mileage for Corn Dance should be increased to at least the level of Turner River's mileage.

Lyle McCandless, personally and on behalf of Big Cypress Alliance, observed that not much has been learned from the Turner River process. During that process the committee set up a subcommittee which he said mysteriously diluted approximately 350 miles of trails down to 110 miles, leaving contributors of 240 miles of trails with no explanation as to why their trails were rejected. Mr. McCandless recommended instead of the current process that NPS staff, FWC staff, and sportsmen with on-the-ground experience to go into the field together and locate all of the existing reasonable sustainable trails in the unit. After which the public should be asked if their needs are accommodated by the proposed trail system. Mr. McCandless asserted that no subcommittee is needed, and warned that by forming subcommittees ORVAC is setting itself up for failure again. Mr. McCandless questioned the legality of a system by which trails are drawn on maps without extensive field work, and then seek input from individuals who will request access in certain areas.

Ms. Clark thanked public speakers for voicing their passion and heart and love for the Preserve, as well as committee members for their hard work.

Wrap up: Ms. Clark reminded the committee they would have an opportunity to submit input for the August minutes via email. She urged committee members with recommendations for agenda items to please submit ideas to someone from the Agenda subcommittee. And she advised the committee that she would be circulating a calendar to them via email in order to plan meeting dates for 2011.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned

